

VZCZCXYZ0009
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLB #0349/01 0841532
ZNR UUUUU ZZH (CCY ADX 00470030 MSI7945)
R 251532Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4523
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 3810
RHMFISS/USCENTCOM SPECIAL HANDLING MACDILL AFB FL
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3607
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

UNCLAS BEIRUT 000349

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDED CAPTION)

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE
DEPT FOR NEA/FO AND NEA/ELA
ALSO FOR IO ACTING A/S WARLICK
P FOR DRUSSELL, RRANGASWAMY
USUN FOR WOLFF/SCHEDLBAUER/GERMAIN
NSC FOR MCDERMOTT, SHAPIRO
DOD FOR FLOURNOY/KAHL/DALTON
DRL/NESA FOR WHITMAN, BARGHOUT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAL](#) [LE](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON: UN CONCERNED THAT LACK OF CONSTITUTIONAL
COUNCIL COULD LEAD TO VIOLENCE

REF: A. BEIRUT 263
[1](#)B. BEIRUT 247

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) In a March 23 meeting with foreign Ambassadors, UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams stressed the need for a working Constitutional Council, the body that is to adjudicate election disputes. Williams said he feared that the lack of a functioning Council could lead to serious conflicts following the June 7 vote. Williams urged the Ambassadors to stress to GOL officials the need for a resolution to the Constitutional Council impasse. GOL officials and other donors also provided updates on the work of the Supervisory Commission for the Election Campaign (SCEC) and elections observation missions' plans for monitoring the 2009 elections. End Summary.

UNSCOL CONCERNED ABOUT
THE DAY AFTER

[1](#)2. (SBU) In a March 23 conference attended by the Ambassador and other foreign Chiefs of Mission, the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL), Michael Williams, said he was troubled by the lack of a functioning Constitutional Council in the lead up to the June 7 parliamentary elections. The Council will play a critical role in the elections, as it provides the only legal recourse for adjudicating challenges to the electoral results -- Refs A, B. (Note: Parliament underwent a contentious, politicized process to name its five members, and the cabinet has not yet nominated, or even discussed, the five remaining appointments. End note.) Williams stressed to the group that they should urge GOL officials to solve this matter before the June 7 elections. Williams said violence could erupt if stakeholders do not have a legal way to challenge election results. (Note: Christian opposition leader Michel Aoun still complains that his challenge to the results of 11 seats in the 2005 elections remain unanswered due to the lack of a functioning council. End Note.)

MEDIA MONITORING LEADING
UP TO THE ELECTIONS

¶3. (SBU) A representative from the Ministry of Interior's Supervisory Commission for the Election Campaign (SCEC), Dr. Khalil Gebara, briefed electoral donors on the SCEC's work to date preparing for the June 7 parliamentary elections. Gebara said the SCEC has a media monitoring team that is monitoring television, radio, websites, news, and magazine advertisements related to the elections. In addition, Gebara noted that the electoral law stipulates that all media outlets are forbidden from running any campaign related advertisements on election day.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE
MONITORING

¶4. (SBU) The SCEC will also begin monitoring campaign spending in the coming months, Gebara said. The SCEC will monitor both direct spending by candidates and spending done on behalf of candidates. Campaign spending limits, which will be based on the number of registered voters, will be set soon after the March 30 deadline for the registered voters' list to be updated, according to Gebara. The new electoral law stipulates that candidates will only be allowed to spend \$2.66 per constituent in their district, in addition to a fixed amount of \$100,000. (Note: This can be a large amount, for example in Baalbeck-Hermal, a district where each list could include 10 candidates, the total will be \$765,000 per candidate, according to International Foundations for Electoral Systems head Richard Chambers. End Note.) Gebara said candidates will have to submit their campaign spending

paperwork in order to run in the elections by April 6. After the April 6 date, candidates will have 45 days to withdraw their candidacy.

SCEC, NOT AN
ENFORCEMENT BODY

¶5. (SBU) Gebara noted that the SCEC is not an enforcement body. He said the SCEC will monitor election-related activities and develop a report of violations after the elections, but will have no legal authority to enforce rules and regulations. If the Constitutional Council were functioning, the SCEC would prove useful as its report could be used during dispute resolution as evidence of electoral violations, according to Gebara. However, he noted that if a candidate wins a seat in parliament, even if he were found guilty of committing a violation, he would be immune from prosecutions given the status as an MP.

RESULTS WILL BE ANNOUNCED
SOON AFTER THE ELECTIONS

¶6. (SBU) Gebara added that the MOI will announce the results of the election, district by district. He added that the Ministry of Interior will not wait for all the results to come in to report, but would wait for each "muhafaza" (larger districts) to announce the results of each of their "cazas" (smaller districts), and then report the results "muhafaza" by "muhafaza" (there are six "muhafazas.") The Ministry of Interior expects to report all results within two days of the election, Gebara said.

UPDATE ON
OBSERVATION MISSIONS

¶7. (SBU) The Carter Center's Field Office Director, Delphine Blanchet, said the Carter Center was the first group to submit an application to the Ministry of Interior to receive official accreditation as election observers and is awaiting a response. Six of the Carter Center's Long Term Observers

(LTO) landed in Beirut on March 11 and have divided into three teams of two and deployed to Tripoli, Sidon, and Beirut. Blanchet added that an official delegation of 20 individuals from the U.S. would arrive to Beirut around June 1, and stay until June 10.

¶8. (SBU) The EU's Deputy Head of Mission, Michael Miller, said the EU will also send a mission to monitor the elections. A team of 30 LTOs will arrive to Beirut on April 24. The members will be deployed to Beirut, Tripoli, Tyre, Sidon, and Zahle. An official EU delegation, composed of EU parliamentarians, will arrive May 28, and a total of 100 EU observers will be deployed throughout Lebanon on June 7.

¶9. (SBU) In addition, the National Democratic Institute's (NDI) Country Representative, Joe Hall, said NDI's LTOs would be on the ground soon, and would be deployed in two person teams to Jezzine, Zahle, Bekaa, and Beirut. Hall added that an official delegation of NDI observers would arrive on June 1 and depart on June 10. Williams added that the Arab League plans on sending a observation mission as well, but noted that a formal decision is unlikely to be announced before the March 30 Arab League Summit in Doha.

SISON